

Comment (Case 3676) – Response to a comment on the proposed conservation of *Tupinambus indicus* Daudin, 1802 by replacement of the neotype
(see BZN 72(2): 134–141 [Case]; 73(1): 55–58; 73(2–4): 116–118)

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We here provide a response and additional notes to the comments made by Böhme, Koch and Ziegler (2016) to Case 3676, wherein they dispute the proposal by Weijola (2016) to replace the neotype of *Varanus indicus* with a topotypic specimen.

1. It is agreed that the holotype of *Tupinambis indicus* Daudin, 1802, is lost and that sufficiently diligent searches have been made so that this can be accepted as fact. Daudin's (1802) illustration is sufficient to confirm that the lost type represents a *Varanus* in the *indicus* group, but not to distinguish among several similar species in that group.

2. The type locality "Ambon" is not in dispute, and has since the original description been associated with the name *Varanus indicus*.

3. Following Boulenger (1885) the name *Varanus indicus* was widely applied to a phenotypically variable mid-sized, mangrove-inhabiting monitor species distributed across the SW Pacific, coastal New Guinea and northern Australia. The range of descriptions applied to it is comparatively broad, and features we now know to vary among species are not typically given as characteristic of *V. indicus* sensu stricto until Brandenburg (1983) (e.g., large dorsal scales, faint dorsal banding, pale throat). Tongue color was not specified until noted by Sprackland (1992) and Böhme et al. (1994).

4. As new species were recognized it became important to establish the character states in *V. indicus*. Unfortunately in doing so the Bonn group evidently did not consult topotypic material, but relied instead on their own typological concept of *V. indicus*. All Ambon specimens with reliable data in collections worldwide represent a single species that does not match this concept. Rather than accept that this animal with faint dorsal bands and a pink and gray tongue was Daudin's *V. indicus*, Philipp et al. (1999) located two untagged specimens in a jar containing the label "Ambon" and concluded that two *Varanus* species occupied Ambon.

5. This is a simple error stemming from a failure to accept the most logical view, and *Varanus cerambonensis* should correctly stand as a junior synonym of *V. indicus*.

6. As detailed by Weijola (2015) and Weijola & Sweet (2015) all properly documented museum specimens and all field work from Ambon and the adjacent islands of Buru, Seram, and Saparua point to a single-species system. While one can never prove a negative, common sense should take preference over obscurantism at some point.

7. The counterproposal made by Böhme et al. (2016) to change the type locality to match their erroneous selection of a neotype, simply compounds the error. Improvising a locality, as proposed by Böhme et al. (2016) for the undocumented neotype is an

unacceptable solution as it has the potential to cause long lasting damage to future work on the taxonomy of the *V. indicus* species group. The only undisputed attribute of *V. indicus* is that it is native to Ambon, and this should be retained as definitive.

References

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